

PROGRAMA C

JORGE MARÍN

A Brief Account of the Construction of the Indies

Jorge Marín, *El mundo de los indios*, 2016



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December 2016 - March 2017

Gallery C

"We had justice, a codification of vengeance. And science, a codification of Magic. Anthropophagy. The permanent transformation of Taboo into totem".

Oswald de Andrade
Cannibalist Manifesto, 1928

"... they are more barbaric than one could imagine, given their complete lack of knowledge of the written word; they do not understand how money is used, they almost always walk around naked, and they carry bales on their backs and shoulders, as if they were animals (...). Here is the evidence of their savage way of life, resembling that of animals: their monumental and execrable sacrifices of human victims to the demons; that they eat human flesh; that they bury the wives of their chiefs alive along with their dead husbands, and other similar crimes".

Juan Ginés de Sepúlveda
Democrates alter, 1547¹

Cannibalism in native American tribes was a recurring topic during the Colonial Era. Colonial literature created the paradigm for the representation of indigenous people: ferocious beasts, insatiable cannibals, with no culture, language, laws or religion. Congruous with this image, cannibalism surfaced as a myth that allowed Europeans to slave and oppress these hostile "others". It was an artifice used to reveal the barbaric nature of those who were not like them. Contrary to this posture, upon which American settlers based their aggression and control, Dominican Friar Bartolomé de las Casas declared that Hispanic

[1] Taken from Sara Castro-Klarén (1997). «Corpo-rización tupí y Léry y el Manifiesto Antropófago» in *Revista de Crítica Literaria Latinoamericana*, Year XXIII, N° 45, p.167.

intervention should by no means be justified with these arguments. An example of this is his *A Brief Account of the Destruction of the Indies*, a text published in 1552 that widely condemned the consequences, for indigenous peoples, of the colonization of the New World, on whose title Jorge Marín based the name given to his installation for this version of *Programa C* at the Medellín Museum of Modern Art.

436 years after the "discovery" of the Americas -a questionable notion used to refer to a territory whose existence was not unknown to native Americans-, Brazilian writer Oswald de Andrade published his *Cannibalist Manifesto*, a text in which reasoning on cannibalism becomes a shocking metaphor of cultural hegemony, and the cannibal gesture a symbol for the swallowing of a foreign culture. In other words, the manifesto presented itself as a way to rethink cultural dependence and to discuss the impossibility of recovering our self-image and identity apart from colonial and neocolonial influences.

Although the consequences of reflecting on our identity under such filters gave way to vigorous revisions, the lack of precision and gaps in most of our Pre-Hispanic history are persistent, mainly due to what could be understood as the creation of a narrative whose truth was always determined by a specific interest or purpose. Situations such as the radical changes undergone by indigenous peoples' lifestyles, the almost complete extermination of many groups who had settled in this territory, combined with the circumstances and actors that dominated such narrative, have resulted in the persistence of an ethnocentric (Eurocentric) perspective in which opposing concepts such as center-periphery, colonizers-colonized, us-the others, have been defining for the large-scale dynamics of history.

A Brief Account of the Construction of the Indies is a project that tries to answer the question of how art and history can be intertwined, not to arrive to scientific conclusions, but rather to question historical documents and discourses inherited as sources of truth. For this purpose, Jorge Marín uses fiction, a resource mostly used in literature, and extrapolates it to his artistic practice as a strategy to describe, call attention to, criticize and even subvert a reality that would otherwise be difficult to narrate.

Official history, a discursive construction aiming at hiding contradictions and differences, has also used fiction to reaffirm the 19th century precept that national identity must be homogenic and hegemonic –a concept that the artist responds to by using a fictional narrative to stage a possible alternate, subversive history, the way it could be or could have been.

For Marín, questioning history through the use of fiction is a form of resistance towards the hegemonic discourses that have for years predominated in the descriptions of Aburrá Valley, a geographical area currently known as Medellín, which approximately 16 centuries ago was populated by aboriginal tribes known as the *Aburráes*.

We know more about their cosmogony and the dynamics of their daily life, which have gone practically unnoticed in popular memory, by archaeological than by historical reconstruction. Forced out of their land and relocated to different areas of the department of Antioquia after the arrival of the Spaniards, the Aburráes were obliged to give into Spanish culture and to take on the role of "the other", "the Other" as subalterns.

This installation is neither a complacent nor contemplative piece for the aesthete's eye. On the contrary, Marín expects the spectator to take on a scrutinizing, interpretive and critical attitude, where once immerse in the fictional tale offered by this work, they will feel compelled to inquire about the nature and intent of the information being presented.

This project also constitutes an open question about our own self-knowledge, without implying that there is a single true answer. In the end, isn't truth a form of fiction nourished by memory and language?

Melissa Aguilar / Curator

JORGE MARÍN

(Ciudad Bolívar, Antioquia, 1986)

Marín is a graphic designer and holds a Master's degree in Fine Arts from Universidad de Antioquia. He has taught digital photography as well as art history and appreciation. He has participated in group shows such as *Nodos de la emergencia* [Emergence Nodes] at the Arte-Cámara pavillion in the 2012 ArtBo Art Fair, *Nuevos talentos en el arte* [New Art Talents] (2015), MDE15. *Historias globales/Prácticas locales* [Global Stories/Local Practices] (2015), and *Contexto: palabra, escritura y narración en el arte contemporáneo* [Context: Word, Writing and Narrative in Contemporary Art] (2016). He has participated in residencies in spaces such as Taller 7 (2014) and Casa Tres Patios (2015), in Medellín; FLORA ars+natura (2015), in Bogotá; and R.A.T., Exchange-based Artist Residencies (2015), in Mexico City. He lives and works in Jardín, Antioquia.

MELISSA AGUILAR

(Medellín, 1983)

Aguilar holds a Master's degree in Art History from Universidad de Antioquia. She works as an independent curator and researcher, and is currently participating in several research projects on Colombian contemporary art. She has worked as a university professor and collaborated in several exhibition catalogues and academic publications since 2010. She was recently awarded IDARTES and Fundación Gilberto Alzate Avendaño's VIII National Prize for Historic Curatorship (2015), the Ministry of Culture's visual arts research grant (2016); and a grant for critical essay writing from Alcaldía de Medellín (2016). She lives and works in Medellín.

Acknowledgements:

Hernán Pimiento [Curator of Archeology, Museo Universitario de la Universidad de Antioquia]

Margarita Reyes [Curator of Archeology and Ethnography, Museo Nacional de Colombia]

Nancy Avilán [Consultant for the Education and Cultural Department at Museo Nacional de Colombia]

Natalia Álvarez [Historian]

Neyla Castillo [Ph.D. in Archeology]

Sandra Vélez [Architect]

Credits:

Ceramics and goldsmith: Rubén Mejía

Audiovisual production: Felipe Giraldo & Gabriel Ángel



Photos: Jorge Marín

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Generous support
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Acknowledgements: Pinturas Tito Pabón

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